

Faro de Los Morillos de Cabo Rojo
(Cabo Rojo Light)
(Los Morillos de Cabo Rojo)
Los Morillos de Cabo Rojo
Cabo Rojo Vicinity
Puerto Rico

HAER No. PR-11

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
Faro de Los Morillos de Cabo Rojo
(Cabo Rojo Light)
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PR-11

Location: On the south easterly point of Cabo Rojo, on the Morrillos, south west of Puerto Rico
Position 17° 56.1' N - 67° 11.5' W

Date of Erection: 1882

Present Owner: U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Coast Guard

Original Owner: Central Lighthouse Commission
Colonial Public Works Office
Harbor and Port Section
Government of Spain

Present Use: Unoccupied

Significance: Cabo Rojo Light was built in 1882 as a 3rd order light with 18 miles range that showed a white light eclipsed every minute. The present structure stands very much as it was back in 1882; although structural alterations have been introduced.

The dwelling's original drawings show a structure very similar to those of Arecibo and Cabo San Juan Lights. It was a 3rd order lighthouse designed for 1st and 3rd class keepers, 27.5 x 11.35 x 6 mts. The main entrance, on the north facade, opened, through a small entry hall, into a 5.15 x 4.84 mts. vestibule. A corridor, 2.18 x 5.2 mts. led from the vestibule to the tower. East and west of the corridor, which divided the structure into two equal sections, the keepers, engineer, and storerooms were found.

Each keeper had a 5 x 4.7 mts. living room, two 4.8 x 3.27 mts. dormitories, one kitchen-dining area also 4.8 x 3.27 mts, and a bathroom. The storeroom and the engineer's room were each 5 x 4.7 mts. Each room had a double wood leaf window. The beamed ceilings were 4 mts. high approximately. The floors were covered with white and gray Genoa marble slabs with the exception of the keepers quarters that were covered with wooden planks.

The hexagonal tower is 18.30 mts. high including the lantern. It is 5 mts. in diameter with a 3.2 mts. internal opening which shelters the winding cast-iron stairway. The tower has two windows which open south and a door leading to the roof (used for water collecting). The circular vaulted oil room, 3.2 x 1.8 mts., was originally located under the tower. A brick and stone cylindrical watchroom under the illuminating apparatus was a 4.5 x 2 mts. high and opened to a circular cemented gallery surrounded by a cast-iron balustrade.

The original structure was altered in 1959; the bedrooms located between each bedroom and kitchen were converted to bathrooms, the old kitchens to bedrooms, the old storeroom and engineer room to kitchens, and the old living rooms to living-dining areas. Original walls were slightly altered to give way to new partitions, but no substantial alterations were further introduced. A small entry hall --following original style lines-- was also built apparently during this period.

The old 2.5 mts. diameter cast-iron, copper, and glass lantern still houses the original 1881 lenticular Sautter, Lemmonier & Cie. lens. The central revolving flashing drum is 1 mt. in diameter. The lens has 8 flashing panels. Also 7 annular rings including bull's eye in each panel of the central drum. In the panels above the central drum there are 11 prisms and 4 on each one below. The lens was mounted on a chariot activated by a clock system. The clock cord descended through a cast-iron drop tube in the tower's stairway. It had a 200 lb. weight. The clock apparatus was protected by a cast-iron and glass case. The supporting pedestal was also made of cast-iron.

In 1960 the weight driven clock work rotating mechanism was removed and replaced by an electric motor. In 1967, the lighthouse was automated, left unmanned, and boarded up. The light characteristics went

through multiple changes in 1918, 1962, 1967, and 1974. As the light stands today, the fixed white light has a 15 mile range and the flashing 22 miles.

The dwelling's simple decorative elements consist fundamentally of an unelaborate cornice which theme is repeated in the tower. The structure's severe appearance is enhanced by the massive hexagonal tower crowned by a wide-opening simple cornice.

Cabo Rojo is a major light that signals the south west point of the Island since 1882, thus being the third light built according to the master lighthouse plan. It also signals the south east point of the entrance, from the Carribean Sea through Mona Passage, into the Atlantic Ocean. Its location is on an isolated point in a deserted white lime rocky cliff surrounded by marshes and lagoons, with an opened command of sea and land. The green sugar and pineapple fields of the coastal valleys are seen against the gray-green mountains of the distant Sierra Bermeja Mountain Range.

Transmitted by:

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from the National Register Nomination
prepared by Dr. Benjamin Nistal-Moret,
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